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IRELAND AT THE WORLD'S FAIR.

BY THE RIGHT HON. THE COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN.

IT IS a wonderful creation, that city of white palaces amongst the gleaming waters and waving verdure, at which the people of the New World are calling the nations of the earth to assemble, and where we may wander for long hours amidst the marvels of art and industry and science and nature, gathered from every land. And it is but fitting that this great Exposition, which seeks to represent every phase of life on the earth, should not only invite to her halls the wise, the great, the eloquent, the learned and the leaders of the peoples together in order to demonstrate the common brotherhood of all mankind, but that, hard by her palaces, we should find a place set apart where the common, every-day life of all sorts and conditions of men of various nations of the world may be witnessed by the most stay-at-home of Americans.

And, if we mistake not, many of the visitors to the World's Fair, who are also lovers of human nature, will own to themselves that they have carried away more vivid remembrances of the doings and ways of men and nations as illustrated on the Midway Plaisance, than even of their most wonderful handiwork as seen in the show-cases of the great buildings.

In this common camping-ground we may betake ourselves to one of the temples of ancient Egypt, hundreds of years before Christ; we may become explorers of Central Africa and the huts of the Soudanese, enlivened by the tom-toms of the comely black musicians, or we may watch the jesters and the jugglers of the East, still puzzling, with their tricks, the magicians of the West. Or we can turn from all the brilliant coloring and gay wares shown us by the Chinese and Japanese, to find ourselves amongst the quaint little Esquimaux and Laplanders, who, perhaps, seem most out of place amidst all this sun and radiance. Or, again, we may wander amongst the savage tribes of the South Sea Islands; or, if we will, we may spend our summer afternoons doz-

ing under a tree listening to martial music amidst surroundings which must make us wake with a start to wonder if we are, indeed, subjects of the Kaiser Wilhelm.

And to what end have all these shows and sights been brought here at such vast trouble and expense? Many nations have doubtless combined to bring about this panorama. Not only have the promoters of the World's Fair desired to see it as complete in every detail as possible, but no nation was willing to be unrepresented here, or to lose a chance of participating in the spoils to be expected as the result of this peaceful contest of competition.

But it is of the why and wherefore of one little settlement at the very head of the Midway Plaisance that I would speak, and of the reasons that make those who are responsible for its erection believe that its bare, grey old tower and its little, white-washed, thatched cottages will appeal even more powerfully to thousands of American citizens than the brilliant hues and gorgeous displays of more ostentatious spectacles. Yes; for it is here that "the distressful country" lifts high her green flag from the battlements of Blarney and calls on the sons and daughters of Erin to show proof that a surpassing love for the old country and for all that reminds them of her is a part of their inheritance which they have not yet lost; and we shall be greatly mistaken if any who boast of Irish blood in their veins do not resort thither with their children in order to call to mind the stories told by parents of the scenes of their childhood, or muse over bygone days which they themselves can recall in the dear old home, surrounded by a mother's love and a father's blessing, and all those recollections, whether of joy or sorrow, which tend to forge lasting ties between those of the same kindred and the same country. The architects who designed and carried out the plan have striven to give a faithful and truthful representation of the scenes they seek to depict.

Blarney Castle is an exact reproduction (on a scale of two-thirds) of the stronghold of the old McCarthys. The entrance, copied from Cormac chapel at the Rock of Cashel, and the Cloisters of Muckross, are from drawings taken on the spot, and each cottage is the copy of an actual cottage now existing in some part of Ireland. The scant, but durable furniture; the old dressers and settles and stools are copied from special designs; the

iron pots, the old delft ornaments, all hail from home, and the bog-turf!—inhale its fragrance! If you know it not, your feet have never pressed the Irish sod. And many another small trace of Irish life will be recognized by the initiated, not to speak of the sounds of the harp, the national instrument, wafting forth national airs in response to the touch of an Irish patriot's daughter; the pipes calling forth the dance and the jig, and Irish voices making the air melodious with the wild and pathetic strains of Irish song.

But it is in the actual dwellers and workers in the village that the interest will chiefly concentrate, for whatever may be the defects in the imitations we have made of inanimate things these newly imported lads and lasses show their origin plainly enough, with their rosy cheeks—the tint of which some doubting American visitors have been rash enough to hint must be artificial—and their deft hands plying needle or loom or wheel or carving-tools with equal dexterity. If it is impossible absolutely to represent a quiet and peaceful cottage life in the wilds of Ireland in a place where thousands of visitors pass daily, yet this comes as near the original as circumstances will permit, and we believe that the remembrances of the past which the sight will recall, with the aspirations which it will renew of being a credit and an honor to the old people, the old home, the old country in this new world, in whose history and life the Irish element counts for so much—these remembrances and aspirations must be full of wholesomeness and help.

But was it merely the purpose of inspiring such sentiments, noble as they may be, that induced the “Irish Industries Association” to set down this little industrial colony in the World's Fair, at the cost of considerable trouble and at the risk of many thousands of dollars advanced for the purpose by kind friends both in the old country and in America? No. The mission intrusted to us by the people of Ireland, represented as they are in our councils by persons of all classes, all denominations of religion, and all sections of politics, is one of wide and practical importance to the poor of Ireland, and not only has it been taken heartily in hand by our Committee but it has been enthusiastically indorsed by many public meetings in different parts of Ireland. We not only desire to represent the life of some of Ireland's peasantry, but we desire to appeal

through their skill and quickness and dexterity to Ireland's friends and to show that through these qualities a great work can be done for Ireland.

What has been the reason for the great decrease in the population of Ireland? What has been her curse, apart from (although in great measure owing to) England's misgovernment? Is it not that her people have mainly relied on the land for their sustenance, and that any bad season or other mischance has found them with no other means of living to resort to? And so they have had to face one of two alternatives: practical starvation at home or emigration. And this amongst a people who not only have an intense love of home, but who appear naturally to possess industrial aptitude, calculated to make their country prosperous! Need these things be? Although the new countries of the West are goodly lands of hope for the emigrant, yet need Ireland be depopulated yearly of the flower of her young men and maidens who cling to home and parents despite all hardships and scanty fare, and who part from their country with a sore wrench never wholly forgotten throughout life? And all the while there is running to waste not only the manual dexterity referred to, but a whole treasury of water-power, and seas teeming with fish.

Both political parties have seemed to recognize these facts of late, and we gratefully acknowledge the good likely to be done by Mr. Balfour's light railways in opening up the country and the action of the Congested District's Board, and the development of the dairy industry. Those of us who are Home-Rulers are inclined, however, to believe that Ireland's full industrial development can only come under a complete system of self government, and under that self government we look forward to a golden future, though it may be attained but slowly and through many difficulties. But be that as it may, we who believe in that golden future are bound to strain every nerve to prepare the people for it, and so it will be seen that in this work of promoting the industries of the country persons of the most widely differing opinions (so long as they be lovers of their country) can meet together and strive together for a common end, however diverse may be their expectations and desires regarding the future. It is thus that during the past seven years the Irish Industries Association has been seeking to promote and develop the very beginnings of all industries likely to become permanent, and so to

train the workers that they may be able by and by to meet the demands of the trade so soon as regular trade connections can be made for them.

We believe that although machinery has transformed the whole face of the country, yet there is still a place for the manufactures of the hand which machinery can never displace, and that the proper organization and development of these is full of moral as well as material good to the country that possesses them.

In the north of Ireland the shirt-making and underclothing industries are fully developed in connection with the trade, agents being distributed throughout the country who give out and receive back the work, untold comforts to hundreds and hundreds of families being the result. The knitting industry is in many places organized on the samelines, and though the wages seem to us horribly low, the people walk for miles to obtain the work. We now desire to foster other home industries in other parts of Ireland, hopeful of like consequences. The lace and crochet industries set on foot mostly during famine years are already well known and appreciated, and offer a hopeful field for further development, and we appeal to lovers of lace and embroideries in America to examine our productions in this direction both in the village and in the Woman's Building, where finished specimens of our work are on view. The Roman Catholic prelates of America have been most generous in giving us orders for vestments and allowing us to exhibit them along with some of our ecclesiastical laces. We are earnestly desirous that their example may be followed by others of the clergy, and by those who propose to make offerings of such articles, as well as by ladies who desire laces for personal adornment, and who may have been misled as to the character of Irish laces by the quality of those wretched specimens offered for sale by the hawkers who come on board the Atlantic liners at Queenstown. Irish lace has often suffered by the pooriness of its design, and by the want of knowledge of both art and fashion by those under whose guidance it has been made.

Much has been done to remedy these deficiencies by various efforts during recent years. Innumerable touching stories can be told of heroic and far-seeing work being accomplished for the poor in these country districts by one kind-hearted lady or another, in many cases working single-handed, and in others in connection with some religious order. During the last few years the prosecu-

tion and teaching of such industries in convent schools have received much impetus from the wise action of Sir Patrick Keenan and the Board of National Education, who have invited the teachers to instruct their higher classes in industrial work instead of adhering to the purely literary curriculum, and who give them fees for so doing. Good results are already springing from this policy, notably so in the case of the woollen weaving established at Foxford, and the linen weaving at Skibbereen and Queenstown.

But the difficulty which has confronted all such local industrial work has been its isolation, its distance from the market, its want of knowledge of the coming needs of the world of fashion in London and Paris and New York. And yet these difficulties have to be overcome; the newest shapes, the best designs, the most modern colors must all be studied and carried out by these peasants in the wilds of Ireland if our modern hand-workers are to secure and maintain their hold on the market. Here comes in the need of outside help, such as our Association aims to give to industries in their early days, and in the diversified form in which we find them, whether under the charge of one person or a committee; whether the outcome of private enterprise, or in the hands of an industrial or convent school as the centre. We aim at backing up all such efforts and at supplying teaching and designs to the workers, and also at providing a market for their goods. We have already made some advance in our objects—we have familiarized the public of Great Britain with Irish work, its variety, and its beauty; we have established shops and held sales which have been the means of disposing of a large quantity of work annually; we have been able to obtain trade orders which have kept many and many poor persons from want during hard seasons. But our work is only beginning—we need teachers, designers, commercial travelers, organizers and training-schools; we want capital wherewith to make grants of money and material to young industries; we want to start others, such as poultry-raising and the raising of early flowers and vegetables. Money is wanted for all these things and, therefore, we are endeavoring to obtain a regular income by enrolling a large number of new members in our Association, both at home and in America, who will show their full sympathy with our work by regularly subscribing \$1 or \$2 a year to it; and who will promote the use of

such Irish manufactures as they may deem worthy of encouragement.

Need our objects in planting the Irish village at Chicago be further inquired into? We seek to remind not only the Irish-Americans but the American public generally of the work of the Irish peasantry; we desire to secure not only their custom, but their hearty support of the movement in its development; and we are sanguine that we shall not appeal in vain for what we confidently believe will largely tend to the uplifting of a whole country.

ISHBEL ABERDEEN.